



natural lakes and prairie marshes; wet prairies and fens; bottomland forests

### **Iowa Status**

common, native

### **Iowa Range**

statewide

### **Bibliography**

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.

## **diatoms**

representative specimens

Kingdom: Protista  
Division/Phylum: Chrysophyta

### **Features**

Diatoms are one-celled, microscopic organisms. They have rigid, symmetrical shells (called frustules) made of silica. The shells are like small boxes with lids and often have patterns of pits or ridges. Shells are resistant to decomposition and build up on the bottom. They can provide much information about diatoms living many years in the past. Diatoms, along with green algae, make up most of the phytoplankton. Diatoms store food as oil. They were important in the formation of fossil fuels.

### **Natural History**

Diatoms are aquatic. They live in ponds, lakes, streams, and rivers. Diatoms use a stream of cellular fluid to move. They are found in the greatest numbers in spring and early summer. They reproduce asexually most commonly, although sexual reproduction may occur. Diatoms produce their own food.

### **Habitats**

Mississippi River; Missouri River; interior rivers and streams; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs;